

Editorial

Why a new journal in Public Health?

Why a new journal? Because it's a *Journal of Public Health Research*.

When we decided to launch a new journal, we thought a lot about the topics readers would like to see and read about. The most important thing was that the new journal had to fit the modern concept of public health. It immediately became clear that, whereas the concept of health is rather difficult to interpret, the public health connotation is much more complex.

Beyond general definitions, which everyone generally agrees on, we felt we were exploring a maze, with different definitions of health at each turn.

The aspects of this concept emphasized by medicine are not exactly the same as those we have to take into account in the debate with economists, social science researchers, managers, psychologists, technology experts, policy makers and scholars in the field of marketing and communication. Moreover, how far can legal and ethical issues join market and productive activities and progress together towards a system safeguarding health? And what about the people in the new e-health or m-health revolution? What do web 2.0 and social network people think about health?

As mentioned previously, the problem was even more complicated than that; we were thinking not so much about health in general as about public health. We also found other grey areas in the maze: are the concepts of public health based only on people's characteristics, over and beyond the impact and relevance for the health of each individual? How far are these concepts affected by and correlated with the types of health systems? Who are the stakeholders in public health? The population? The citizens? Patients? Patient networks? Policy makers? Industries? What are the health outcomes for the population? Do they coincide with those of patients?

Like Theseus, the famous hero of Greek mythology, we thought we had found our *Ariadne's thread* to lead us out of the maze, by adopting a truly multidisciplinary approach in tackling challenges in the short term, which are most likely characterized not only by health care aspects, but also by important philosophical, economic, social, managerial, technological and communication aspects.

In our opinion, modern scientific research, which ought to include both speculative and applicative approaches, could be the way to generate an important *evidence-based public health debate*.

Claiming that public health is a multidisciplinary science does not

mean claiming it is less important than specialist sciences. It merely means its objectives cannot be achieved within a single field of knowledge. This is in any case valid for many branches of medical science and it would be profoundly unrealistic not to use this modern approach in medical research.

Let us take the example of neurology. In this complex area, each researcher possesses some of the knowledge required and he has to cooperate with other specialists in physiology, pathology, rare diseases and so on.

Or a public health doctor who has to tackle an H1N1 flu pandemic. He should not have to do this alone. Who selects the target population? How many people need to be vaccinated? Which is the most appropriate vaccine? What resources have to be allocated, and what sacrificed? What is the correct communication strategy for the general population, or for specific target groups or the various stakeholders?

And what about the prevention of cardiovascular diseases? How many specialists have to work together if their efforts at prevention are to be effective?

Once again, public health may well be the first science to understand the power of working together - even in a journal that came about to use the web as the *agora* of the 21st century, the preferred nerve tissue where ideas can be shared, compared and discussed.

We are public health researchers and public health officers who remember where we come from, and, *enamoured* of public health philosophy, know full well that only by sharing the various aspects of knowledge can we improve public health activities. The make-up of our Editorial Board reflects this idea, and reputed professors and scientists from all over the world have joined us in this enterprise. Public health researchers have always glimpsed a horizon that others can not yet see, or would not see at all without the public health incentive. We as a group want to press forward, never satisfied and always eager to exceed our own limits, not so much in order to learn more as to safeguard people's health.

Do you remember *I have a dream ...*? Well, so do we! Why not come and join us?

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